

Editorial: Connecting Through Stories

American mythologist and teacher Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) told a story about a colleague who was lecturing on the Hindu concept of *maya*, that the world is like a bubble or an illusion. Following class, a student came up to the professor to express her reservations about the idea. "But *maya*, I don't get it-it doesn't speak to me."

And so it is with stories. A fairy tale is a proper story for children, but for adults, some changes may be necessary to make the tale enjoyable as in "The Princess and the Bowling Ball," which is featured on our cover.

For different ages, different stories apply. The *maya* myth for the university student had no reality because the world as she knew it was a place to learn from and deal with. But for those who have lived long enough to have lost loved ones and the landmarks (both physical and mental) that give one bearings, the concept of the world as an ephemeral bubble seems quite real indeed.

This issue of the *Forum* is a celebration of story. As Pedersen notes in the lead article, "Storytelling is the original form of teaching." Great teachers like Plato, Confucius, and Jesus Christ used stories to connect with their listeners. In the foreign language classroom, storytelling can provide a foundation for acquisition as well as serve as a vehicle for language output. Stories also offer a cultural experience with fairy tales dressing timeless, universal fantasies in national garb, and more contemporary stories mirroring personal experiences in a particular societal context. Different story genres will appeal to different audiences, some being attracted to autobiographical narrative and others preferring the imaginative realms that we have represented in this issue on our Idiom pages.

The use of stories to provide comprehensible input is treated in the articles by Pedersen, McGuire, Stockdale, and Malkina. They discuss various procedures that teachers can use to make stories more accessible to their students. A teacher's style of presentation, questioning techniques, use of imagery-gestures or illustrations accompanying a written text, or exploitation of story grammar as described in Malkina, facilitate the process by which a student makes meaning out of a story.

Two creative ways to use stories to enhance EFL students' productive use of the language are presented in Hines and Amtzis. Using "Story Theater," Hines mobilizes a class to stage its own production of a short story. Besides rendering a dramatic portrayal of a selected story, the students are responsible for obtaining appropriate props and determining special effects. The approach is eminently successful (I have

seen Hines use this approach with teachers in Thailand) and connects with the whole person of the learner. Amtzis draws upon stories to give his students practice in narrative writing. In the spirit of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, students retell a story from the perspective of its different characters. Through roleplay and a series of tasks set down by the teacher, students become acquainted with the structure underlying short fiction (cf. Malkina's story grammar) and begin writing stories of their own.

We tell stories to come to terms with the world. The stories provide a perspective to understand what has transpired in the past and what is happening in the present. Stories can also help us come to terms with language. Caught up in the characters, aroused by the plot, EFL students can be energized through storytelling and make connections with English. This issue of *Forum* gives you the resources for stories to work their magic.